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pictures and other treasures in one of the most interesting museums in the world.

ADELA J. SMITH.

### A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY MANUSCRIPT

THE Museum has lately bought a thirteenth-century manuscript, certain leaves from which are now temporarily shown in Gallery 33. It is a Psalter in Latin, beginning with the first Psalm and continuing, with certain excisions where initial letters and page decorations have been cut out, up to the eightieth. The Psalter consists of forty-nine leaves of vellum,  $11\frac{1}{3}$  inches high and  $8\frac{1}{8}$  inches wide, and is preceded by a much mutilated Calendar of six leaves of the same size. There are also three full-page illuminations, each with two scenes from the Passion of Christ, evidently once a part of the Psalter. Judging from its similarity in many points to the famous Psalter of Saint Louis in the Bibliothèque Nationale, known to have been executed about 1265, it is conjectured that our Psalter is also of that date and, like the other, is the work of Parisian craftsmen. The Calendar is perhaps somewhat later, and as it contains a preponderance of British saints, it can be taken for granted that its workmanship is English.<sup>1</sup> The execution of the Calendar, excellent enough by itself (particularly as regards the remarkable marginal drawing of the Martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul on one of the pages now shown), appears crude in comparison with the far superior beauty of the Psalter and the three illuminations. These indeed represent Gothic writing and illuminating at its highest point. They are of the time when the hieratic, symbolical

style, inherited from the twelfth century, had become imbued and vitalized by the new spirit of naturalism, and had not yet lost its grandeur in the pursuit of realistic trivialities and emotionalism.

The main activity of the Gothic painter was the making of stained glass windows—a craft in which the finished work is separated from the artist's conception by a long and complicated process. The momentary mood and enthusiasm of the artist, which found such ready expression in the Italian frescoes of the fourteenth century, could have little or no result on the completed window. In them all had to be calculated beforehand, and the collaboration of many hands relied on. Each epoch, however, finds the art that fits its needs, and the Gothic ideal of beautiful painting was manifested in the windows. Even the illuminator, whose process allowed so much greater freedom, followed the conventions and handling which the medium of stained glass imposed. The fact is apparent in our illuminations. They are as like the windows as the altogether different materials allow—being painted in pure, flat colors of only half a dozen varieties, and outlined and detailed with a line that is as precise and calligraphic as though drawn on glass.

An art like stained glass, being the work of several rather than of one, can only flourish when inspiration is diffused, when genius belongs to the race as a whole rather than to particular individuals. This was distinctly the case in thirteenth-century France. Art was then anonymous, personalities did not emerge from the general effort of the time, similar developments seemed to take form spontaneously in different places. The Gothic artist copied what some one else had done as willingly as he invented a thing of his own. And the production of such a period, to which contemporaries and previous generations overwhelmingly contribute, has peculiar qualities—a dignity, a harmony, a universality, which distinguish it from work more or less subject to personal caprice.

Thus the illuminations which this article calls attention to differ from all the other pictures and drawings of our collection, though many analogous works may be

<sup>1</sup>The British saints are Saints Thomas à Becket, Cuthbert, Alphege, George (the Patron of England), Dunstan, Aldhelm, Augustine of Canterbury, Edward (King of Wessex), Botolph, Alban, Swithin, Kenelm, Edward the Confessor, Edmund of Canterbury, Edmund (King), Sampson, and Edith. In one of the remaining illustrations is an heraldic shield which, according to R. T. Nichol, may be emblazoned—silver, 2 chevrons gules and is almost certainly that of Sir Ralph Grendon of Grendon, Warwickshire, and Shenstone, Staffordshire, who fought in the Scottish wars of Edward I.

found in other departments in the Museum. They will exemplify also, to those who care for such things, a point of notable interest in an historical collection of European and American art, in that they represent at an early stage the naturalistic movement—the reliance on life and nature, the appeal to experience, which marks the emergence of the modern spirit. Naturalism is the foundation principle of western art and its appearance was the most momentous of our revolutions. Traits of all the modern developments can be discovered in these little pictures as well as the unquestioning creative force of the childhood of our race.

Judging from famous contemporary comments, the main purpose of which Gothic art seems to have been cognizant was instruction. Only an archaeologist and theologian could expound the doctrines and homilies which were read into our pictures. It seems fitting, however, that the explanation of some of their simpler problems should be pointed out. On one page, for instance, the figure of Saint Mary Magdalen is introduced symbolically in the scene of the Last Supper. She is shown drying Christ's feet with her hair after having broken over them "the box of spikenard, very precious"—an event which took place at the house in Bethany on the eve of the Passion. The words of Judas on that occasion are printed on the scroll he holds: *UT QUID PERDITIO HAEC* (to what purpose is this waste. Matthew xxv:8).<sup>2</sup> Otherwise the picture follows literally the texts. Christ, on whose bosom Saint John leans, gives the sop to the one who will betray him. The introduction of the Anointing of Christ's Feet in the Last Supper makes evident the avarice of Judas and explains his treason; it also, no doubt, has a mystical correspondence to the scene occupying the lower half of the page—Christ Washing the Feet of His Disciples. Here Peter raises his hand to his head in illustration of his reply to Christ, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head". These

<sup>2</sup>The inscriptions on the scrolls show what their holders are saying. In the comic drawings in our daily papers, the lines starting from the mouths of the characters and surrounding the words of their dialogue are the survival of the same convention.

words doubtless were destined to appear on the blank scroll he holds. The spirit of naturalism is more evident on this page than on the others. It is prominent in the postures and expressions of the Disciples who bare their feet in the lower picture and particularly, in the Last Supper, in the Apostle who is biting a piece of bread. The artist's intention in this figure was as realistic as that of Pieter Bruegel or Daumier.

The second page calls for no particular explanation. In the Agony, the garden is shown as a place of trees and plants, and among them Christ kneels, praying, according to his scroll, *PATER SI POSSIBILE EST TRANSEAT A ME CALIX ISTE SED NON SICUT EGO* (Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not what I will. . . . Matthew xxvi:39). The innovations on this page are to be found in the lifelike and uncomfortable attitudes of the sleeping Apostles—elsewhere in this scene and in the Betrayal below it, the effect is more or less traditional. The fact that the Betrayal takes place at night is shown by the lantern which one of the men holds up to light the face of Christ, whom Judas kisses. Saint Peter with his sword (originally painted in bright silver-leaf, but now tarnished) cuts off the right ear of the servant of the high priest. The soldiers wear armor of about 1250-75, such as was worn by the Crusaders under Saint Louis.

On the third page, the most beautiful and impressive of the three, the Mocking and Scourging are represented. Its particular beauty is due to the more balanced arrangements and the fewer figures which the subjects allow. The compositions show as ordered patterns against the gold ground. The cock before whose second crowing Peter thrice denied Jesus, surmounts the border—a real cock crowing exultingly with outstretched neck and legs. The idea of wickedness and bestiality in that age are embodied in the mockers and scourgers. In contrast to their contorted expressions is the calm resignation of the central figure of Christ. One of the mockers holds a scroll with the words: *SI FILIUS DEI ES PROPHE- TIZA NOBIS QUIS EST QUI TE PERCUSSIT* (Prophecy unto us, if thou art the Son of God, who is he that smote thee. Matthew

xxvi:68), and back of him is seen Peter, sitting "without in the palace," about to deny his master.

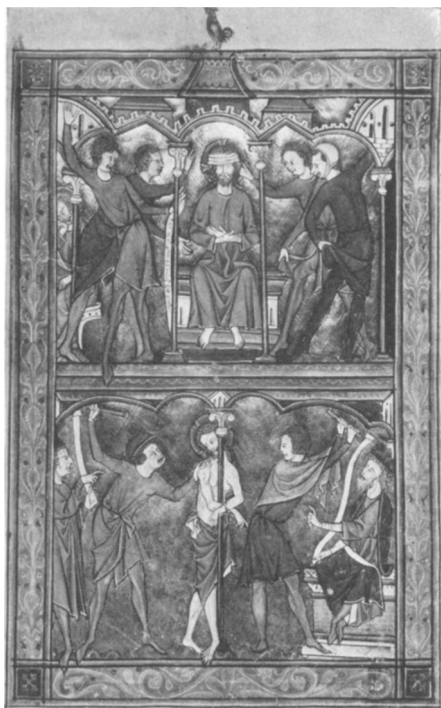
Scenes from the Passion are not the subjects one would expect to find accompanying the Psalms and it is not definitely certain that the illuminations were made for the Psalter. Their style, however, the quality of their workmanship, and their dimensions, as well as the tradition in regard to their connection with it, make any other hypothesis improbable. According to its late owners the book belonged originally to the Abbey of Fontevrault and there is an all but obliterated inscription on the first page of the Psalter, in which the words *Conventu Fontevrault* can perhaps be made out.<sup>3</sup> The leaves as the Museum received them were in a binding of the sixteenth or seventeenth century and from its capacity it is evident that no great number of leaves have been extracted from the book since the time of the binding.

The written pages of the Psalter are as remarkable as the illuminations. Of those selected for exhibition one is the first page with its sumptuous heading (the initial B which occupied probably the whole of the opposite page is missing), *EAT. VIR. QUI. NŌ ABIIT. IN. CONSILIO. IMPOIRUM* (Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly). Examples of the less elabo-

rate pages are also shown. The large and small initials, the writing itself, the bands of ornament filling out the lines to the margins, are all of great beauty. As one turns over the leaves, even in the glare of our study rooms or galleries, the pages sparkle like jewelry. One loves to wonder what their effect must have been in the

subdued radiance of the colored windows or by the flickering light of candles!

Though the book has been so shockingly snipped and cut into, the preservation of what remains, as is not infrequently the case with these old manuscripts, is remarkable. One must indeed search among the illuminations or the enamels to get a just idea of the splendor of Gothic decoration and the fineness of Gothic workmanship. No conception can be formed of what the churches looked like when, as we are told, the sculptures of their façades were highly colored and stood out from a background of gold. The mural paintings which once covered



MOCKING AND SCOURGING OF CHRIST  
XIII CENTURY ILLUMINATION

every part of their interiors, in the famous examples at least, have quite disappeared, and what unrestored windows there are have been blurred by seven centuries of weather. But the books were easily protected from dirt and violence, and many have come down to us guarding intact their first brilliance, as have these leaves. "Time that antiquates antiquities and hath an art to make dust of all things, hath yet spared these minor monuments."

B. B.

<sup>3</sup> This famous abbey was a dependence of the Plantagenets. In it were buried Queen Eleanor, the wife of Henry II, and her son King Richard the Lionhearted.